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CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY:

A Sermon

BY THE RT. REV. BENJAMIN T. ONDERDONK, D. D.,

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK.

2 Corinthians, xi. 3.—"*I fear lest, by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in* CHRIST."

THE apostle is putting his Corinthian brethren on their guard against the arts of false teachers, who, by extraordinary pretensions to piety and zeal, endeavored to underrate *his* services, and give currency to the erroneous systems which they would substitute for the pure religion of the Gospel. He compares their arts to the "subtlety" of "the serpent," when he "beguiled Eve;" evidently intimating that the effects they would produce may not improperly be compared to the tremendous consequences flowing from that first deception. Filled with alarm at the prospect of the spiritual and eternal evils that must be consequent on departure from the pure religion of JESUS, he conjures them to "bear with" him, if, in the exercise of that zealous concern which these imposters had wickedly termed "folly," he manifested "over" them a "godly jealousy," because, through his ministry, they had been brought into covenant relation to the Redeemer; and expresses his lively and affectionate solicitude, "lest, by any means," through these false teachers, their "minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in CHRIST"—the artlessness, humility, and sincerity, so conspicuous in his religion.

Exactly in what the errors of these false teachers consisted, we are not informed. Their system, however, appears to have em-

braced extravagant pretensions to piety, the confident denouncing of others as destitute of it, and affectation of peculiar zeal, labor, and industry, in which they did not scruple to build unjust reputation on foundations laid by others. They appear to have been characterized by a spirit of detraction, and a disposition, not only to deny the merits of others, but to accuse them falsely. Serious corruptions of the Christian doctrine appear to have been propagated by them. And indeed, so great was their defection "from the simplicity that is in CHRIST," that the apostle considered all their pretensions like Satan assuming the form of an angel of light.

However peculiar were the circumstances immediately calling forth the apostolical epistles, every part of them is fraught with matter of interesting and edifying reflection, suited to all times, places and persons. Although the false teachers, who were the immediate cause of the kind anxiety expressed in the text, have, long since, been called to their great account; yet the Church has never been, and surely is not now, without similar enemies. From a vast variety of sources, there is perpetual danger of our being "corrupted from the simplicity that is in CHRIST." To guard against this is a duty enforced by all the solicitude that we should feel to enjoy the spiritual and eternal blessings designed by our holy religion. Let us, then, as an incitement to this duty, consider the nature and practical effects of the "simplicity that is in CHRIST."

This virtue may be considered as comprising humility, artlessness, and sincerity.

But its nature will be best understood by a reference to its effects. Let us consider these in their bearing on our DUTY TO GOD, our DUTY TO OUR FELLOW MEN, and our PERSONAL CHARACTERS.

The simplicity that is in CHRIST should influence our duty to GOD, in the *sentiments that we entertain of Him, and in the service which we render Him.*

Humble dependents upon our Creator; weak, but in His strength; ignorant, but by His teaching; lost, but by His saving grace; finite, while He is infinite; frail, while He is unerring; depraved, while He is perfectly holy; on earth, while He is in

Heaven; our knowledge of Him can be that only which He is pleased to reveal. And the view thus afforded of His nature, attributes, and will, and of His dispensations towards our race, should be embraced by us with humility and sincerity of heart. Satisfied that what claims to be a revelation from Him is proved such by the strongest and most conclusive evidence, we should look to it with the single motive of discovering and embracing the truths which it imparts. Sensible that a revelation of the nature, attributes, will, and acts, of an Infinite Being must be expected to contain much above our comprehension, we should, so far from rejecting the mysteries which it contains, or questioning its genuineness on account of those mysteries, regard them as strong collateral evidence that it is from GOD. For it is clear to a reasonable and unprejudiced mind, that in instructions on the nature, attributes, and acts of GOD, there must be expected to be found truths beyond the powers of human comprehension, and to be admitted simply on the ground of authority; even as, in philosophy, there are many truths incomprehensible to ordinary minds, the rejection of which, however, would be the height of unreasonableness and absurdity; and even as the strongest and best tutored minds, in their philosophical and metaphysical researches, often find all efforts at the full comprehension and elucidation of truths, whose existence is clear as day, totally baffled, and made to stop at that important point of attainment in knowledge, deep conviction of the ignorance of man, and the infinite intelligence of the Deity.

Casting down, then, all vain imaginations, and utterly renouncing all theories built on supposed natural apprehensions of the Great Supreme, the simplicity that is in CHRIST will lead us to the pages of revelation for our only ideas of the nature, attributes, acts, and will of GOD. Whatever is there clearly revealed is conscientiously adopted. Efforts to set aside, or fully elucidate, what is incomprehensible, are checked by the rational conviction that on such subjects, there must be expected to be secret things belonging to the LORD our GOD, as well as those things which are revealed for us. Facts and doctrines constitute the latter; the perfect knowledge and full comprehension of all points connected with them, are included in the former.

Thus, in opposition to the pride of human systems, in disregard of the difficulties raised by weak but presumptuous human intellect, indifferent to the credit of originality in theory, and decidedly hostile to the daring spirit of metaphysical explanation of what the Scripture has left in mystery, the simplicity that is in CHRIST leads to GOD as alone able to impart the knowledge of Himself, and humbly receives all that he reveals, knowing that it, therefore, must be true, and conscious that man can, as yet, but know in part.

Beware, brethren, "lest, by any means, your minds should be corrupted from" this "simplicity that is in CHRIST." A bold and daring spirit is abroad in the world, which, in disregard of the pure principles that united the Christians of the first and best days of the Gospel, in *one faith*, and that the faith, in its simplicity and integrity, of Holy Writ, never wearies in its unhallowed surmisings of what *ought to be* GOD'S truth, or in its presumptuous experiments of the forms into which the contents of the sacred pages can be tortured. The only effectual remedy of this extensively mischievous, and it is to be feared, growing evil, is to go back to the simplicity of those primitive times, when Christians were of one mind and one heart, when faith was drawn from the pure word of GOD, and the divinely constituted mode of preserving and defending it, by the ministry, sacraments, and services of the Church, prevailed through the *one body* of the followers of the Redeemer, and maintained among them unity of spirit, and the bond of peace. Be it your effort, brethren, to preserve, by the same means, the same evangelical character. Amid the jarring opinions with which the pride of man has adulterated the pure word of GOD, ask for the old paths, the primitive doctrine, in the certainty that therein you will find the true intent of the Great Inspirer of all religious truth; cheerfully sacrifice to this object all prejudices excited by human teaching, and modern pretensions to improvement upon the earliest received system of the Gospel; for that system must necessarily be the purest, and the most genuine. In the exercise of this simplicity which is in CHRIST, receive with meekness the ingrafted word: and for any difficulties which you may find therein, wait for the great change, which will remove

you from seeing as through a glass, darkly, to seeing face to face, and from knowing in part, to knowing even as also you are known.

In *the service which we render to* GOD, the simplicity that is in CHRIST should confine us to a single view to His glory, and our spiritual and eternal good. He sees the heart, and if there is in that service, any low or selfish motives, or the least disposition bordering on display, vanity, or pride, it is abomination in His sight.

There are feelings of self-complacency; there is an idea of great merit in our services; there is a fond conceit of being peculiarly the favorites of Heaven, a presumptuous confidence of having been eternally designated, and by a perpetual miracle, preserved, as a chosen object of divine regard; there is an assurance of being removed from all danger of falling from grace; there arises, from one or other of these causes, a comparison, most favorable to ourselves, of our attainments and privileges with those of others—a feeling of conscious superiority that we would fain persuade ourselves is a due appreciation of the divine favor, or Christian pity for the less blessed state of others; there is a fondness for the praise of men; there is a vain exhibition of fancied gifts; there are these affections of the carnal mind, with which the simplicity that is in CHRIST is totally inconsistent. For vanity of one's own advantages, pride in imagined superiority, or love of the applause of fellow worms, to come in competition with the service of the Great GOD, is a profanation that must be most displeasing in His sight.

Cultivate, brethren, the simplicity that is in CHRIST, whereby, in the pureness of your offerings, and the humility and sincerity of heart with which they are made, you may serve GOD truly, both in will and deed. The offering should be not only sacrifices of prayer and praise, but the continued and consistent devotion of your lives to all the duties of piety and morality. Beware "lest your minds be corrupted" to the mingling with this of any offering to their own vanity or pride, to self-interest, or the applause of men. Simple is the offering which GOD requires, and single the view with which He would have it made. Thus be it rendered.

It will be accepted through the merits of your Intercessor; and its recompense will remain for ever, when the self-interested Christian *will have had his reward.*

The simplicity that is in CHRIST should also influence our *duty to our fellow men.*

It is opposed to the ten thousand artifices which the world suggests for the promotion of our interests in life; to the equivocation and dissimulation, so hostile to confidence among men; and to the pride and vain glory which mar social happiness, and inflict so many unmerited pangs.

Unfortunately, there is hardly a calling in life which does not present temptation to promote selfish ends by disingenuous artifices, often designedly kept as secrets of the craft. But even if these arts succeed, and those who practise them are prepared to enjoy their fruits, let them remember that for all these things GOD will bring them into judgment. And are they consistent with strict honesty? Is there integrity in any measure which has a tendency to conceal the real quality by false appearances, and unjustifiable recommendations? Depend upon it, brethren, every system of dealing which is not perfectly open and frank, which takes advantage of ignorance, or which fails in a candid exhibition of the *whole truth* respecting the matter in hand, is inconsistent with the simplicity that is in CHRIST, and can stand excused neither at the bar of strict honesty and integrity, nor at the final scrutiny of the intents and purposes of the heart. The world, either in ignorance, or in its perverted system of morals, may be silent, and even commend; but all who practise such dealings must stand, at the impartial tribunal of the last judgment, convicted of dishonesty and falsehood, and take the portion of the disciples of the great author and abettor of deception.

There is another very prevalent and awful guilty departure from the simplicity that is in CHRIST—*deceitfulness in speech;* letting our yea be otherwise than yea, and our nay than nay. Speech is the gift of GOD, designed to promote His glory, and the good of men. The sin of lying, in all its forms and modifications, and with all the extenuations that the wit of man, the promptings of worldly interest, the customs of society, or the fear of

consequences, can throw around it, stands confest an impious perversion of this noble gift, to the dishonor of the Great Giver, the undermining of confidence among men, and the degradation of the human character. For this complication of guilt, an awful condemnation is revealed from Heaven. It may now be unheeded; the ear may be deaf to it; the trifling and unthinking mind may not stop to regard it; the hardened heart may mock at it; yet liars will find their portion with him, one of the worst representations of whose character, given in Holy Writ, is, that he is a liar, and the father of lies.

In the simplicity that is in CHRIST, brethren, avoid this guilt, and escape this awful danger. Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay. No interest to be answered by equivocation and falsehood is a counterbalance to its iniquity. No present relief it may afford is to be compared with the sweet consciousness of having held fast your integrity. No gloss of custom can make that true which, in its very terms, is false, or separate from it the degrading character, and the threatened recompense, of lying.

Grossly inconsistent, too, with the simplicity that is in CHRIST, are vanity and pride in intercourse with fellow men. Whether these appear as ambition, aspiring to be great at the expense of the happiness of others; as spiritual pride, puffed up with the idea of superior holiness, and manifested by supercilious deportment, an uncharitable tongue, and unkind tempers and dispositions; as self-elation, quick in apprehending injury or insult, and inexorable in demand for vengeance; as vain confidence in intellectual or spiritual superiority, impatient of denial, overbearing in the advancement of opinion, or unjust or unkind towards the sentiments of others; as pride of birth, wealth, station, or person; as insensibility to the privations and miseries of others; in whatever shape they appear, they are hostile to the spirit of our holy religion. Let Christians beware of their corrupting influence. Ministering here either perpetual uneasiness, or a species of joy and satisfaction unworthy of an intelligent being, they cannot but be highly offensive to GOD, and exposed to the severity of His just indignation.

Lastly, in our *personal characters*, the simplicity that is in CHRIST should conspicuously appear.

And this will naturally be the case, if we imbibe the spirit connected with the particulars of the virtue already considered. They will lead to that humility, artlessness, and sincerity, which will throw over the whole character purity, loveliness, and attraction. Mildness and gentleness, will take possession of the heart, and influence the life. Conscious integrity, and singleness of purpose, will preserve the mind from the degrading, self-tormenting, and extensively unhappy influence of a jealous and suspicious temper. Moderation, temperance, and gratitude, will impart to the gifts of Heaven their highest enjoyment. Covetousness, ostentation and extravagance, will give place to Christian feelings of stewardship in the possession of the gifts of Providence, for the good of others, and the glory of the Giver. The miseries of selfishness will be lost in the delights of fidelity in social duty; and the high head, the affected look, and the sullen temper, of spiritual pride, be exchanged for the meekness, kindness, and cheerfulness of the Gospel.

Cultivate, my brethren, this simplicity that is in CHRIST. Take heed lest your minds be corrupted from it. The pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and the love of the applause of men, are its active enemies. Be true, then, to the conditions of your covenant in CHRIST, and renounce them. Strive to be preserved from their influence, that you may possess and manifest the pure, holy, humble, and ingenuous character of the followers of the Lamb.

Thus, in reference to GOD, your fellow men, and yourselves, you are to preserve the simplicity that is in CHRIST. It is a heavenly virtue, for the possession of which, you should seek divine grace, with a diligence and sincerity proportioned to its infinite importance.

No means, accompanying your prayers, can be more promising of success than diligent and careful study of the character of our blessed LORD, and of his first disciples, as given in the inspired pages, and in the records and remains of primitive Christian antiquity. To the religion of that period, when frequent and cruel persecution had a powerful tendency to check insincere professions, and preserve purity of faith, piety, and morals, and the immediate influence of the personal ministry of CHRIST and his apostles yet

shed its blessings on the Church, we may safely look for the doctrine and practice which constitute the true simplicity that is in CHRIST. The nearer we conform to them, the less shall we be in danger of being corrupted from that simplicity. The best prayer that we can offer for ourselves, for society, and for the Church, is, that the spirit of those times may be revived among us; and upon the principles then prevalent, all Christians be united in one body; and as then, be distinguished from the world, not only by profession, but in life and conversation.

JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY SOURCE OF REST AND HAPPINESS:

A Sermon

BY WILLIAM L. JOHNSON,

RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, JAMAICA, L. I.

John, vi. 68.—*"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."*

THE discourse of our LORD, recorded in this chapter, unfolds many of the most essential truths of his Gospel. The words which dropped from his blessed lips on this occasion were indeed spirit and life. Speaking with great authority and intelligence he unlocked the heavenly treasures; he proposed them as worthy of the most ardent pursuit of an immortal soul; and showed by what means they were to be obtained. "Labor not," said he, "for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." He declares himself a sufficient and willing Savior, when he says, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He shows the absolute necessity of that intimate union with Him, which is

effected by his Spirit in the operations of faith; the happy result of which is a participation of his anointing. This unspeakable benefit he expresses in the following strong and metaphorical terms: "I am the bread of life. This is the bread which cometh down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." When this doctrine and these expressions were by many literally understood, our Savior immediately directed to a spiritual apprehension of them; and intimated, from his approaching ascension, that they could not *possibly* be *meant* in a *carnal* sense. "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? It is the *Spirit* that quickeneth; the *flesh* profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you," that is, *my doctrines*, "they are spirit, and they are life."

Further, he shows that salvation is not of man, but of GOD: that we are *entirely* dependent upon Him for illumination to discern the truth, and for ability to embrace the blessings of his Gospel: and thus, to drive us from every false hope, and bring us to the only foundation on which we can rest with safety, he explicitly declares, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of GOD. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." And again, "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."

This exposition of his heavenly doctrines, and the faithfulness and love which prompted him to declare them, one would truly

think, ought certainly to have conciliated his hearers, and attached his professed followers more closely to his person. But these truths were too spiritual, and too humiliating for the generality to relish. As it often happens, they were well enough pleased with the exterior of the sanctuary; but had neither taste to discern those beauties, nor desire to possess those treasures, which make its inmost recesses glorious. The doctrine of man's impotency mortified their *pride;* of spiritual union to the Lord JESUS, opposed their carnal views; of sanctification, was adverse to their corruptions. They murmured; they were offended; and, it is added, "from that time many of the disciples went back, and walked no more with him." It was a season of general defection among those who professed to be CHRIST'S followers. It would seem the far greater portion had entirely renounced his authority, and thrown contempt upon his pretensions; for "they walked no more with him." Their example, no doubt, had its effect; and the poison began to insinuate itself into the hearts of CHRIST'S real disciples. There was but a small number that still adhered to their Master. The thousands which had followed him, were no longer seen in his train. Those that were left, disheartened and disappointed, were in danger of becoming the victims of false shame. Even the *twelve*, the intimate friends of JESUS, and the *chosen* heralds of his Gospel, appear to have been offended at this unexpected event, and to have had their faith greatly shaken. But the compassionate Savior, who knew their weakness, and the severity of the present trial, soon affords them seasonable relief. By a single question he brings to their recollection the wonderful displays of his power and grace; their inviolable obligations of attachment to his person and his cause; and the endearing relation which subsisted between *him* and *them*. "He said unto the twelve, will ye also go away?" This address instantly touches their hearts, and revives the languishing flame of their love. Returning hope and confidence strengthen their holy resolution never to forsake him; and prompt them to reply, "Lord, to whom shall we go? *Thou* hast the words of eternal life."

In this their confession of the Messiah is implied—a conviction of the insufficiency of all human means for the attainment of

salvation—a firm belief in his perfections and qualifications as a Savior—and a resolution to adhere to him as their Savior and LORD.

I. In this reply of the apostles is implied A CONVICTION OF THE INSUFFICIENCY OF ALL HUMAN MEANS FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF SALVATION. "LORD, to whom shall we go?" Shall we apply to the Scribes and Pharisees? Shall we inquire of the ceremonial or moral law? Shall we submit to the decisions of reason?

1. *The Scribes and Pharisees*, and other doctors of the law among the Jews, *at that period, were blind, leaders of the blind.* Their corruptions had darkened their minds, and thrown a veil over the sacred writings; so that the plainest prophecies were misunderstood, and the most important doctrines perverted by them. The "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith," were overlooked or contemned; while particular and proud attention was given to the trifling duties of paying tithes for "mint, anise, and cummin." By their explanations of the Holy Scriptures that which was plain became obscure; that which was of the first importance became indifferent; that which spoke of spiritual glories was construed to mean worldly splendors: and even Messiah, the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer from Sin, the Conqueror of Death, was, through the strange perverseness of their minds, expected under the character of an earthly monarch, who, for the salvation of the Jews, should become the conqueror of all the nations of the earth. To these absurd sentiments was superadded a higher veneration for the traditions of men than for the oracles of GOD: as is evident from the declaration of our Savior, "Ye have made the word of GOD of none effect by your traditions." Such being the character, and such the doctrines of the Jewish teachers, the apostles were convinced that from them no spiritual instruction could be derived.

2. Equally convinced were they that life and salvation could not be obtained from *an observance of the ceremonial or moral law.*

With respect to the *former* they knew that the tabernacle service was chiefly typical, and, under various representations, sha-

dowed forth good things to come. They knew that the sacrifice of a beast could never be accepted by GOD, as a real atonement for iniquity; and, therefore, that being sprinkled with the blood of the victim, was neither to be cleansed from the impurity, nor freed from the guilt of sin. Nor did they dare to rely upon the *moral* law, for acceptance with GOD, and a right to eternal life. Even if they could not recollect that they had been guilty of any gross immorality; if they were conscious that they deserved the character of peaceable and good citizens; yet they knew that they were far from that perfection which the law demands—that they were conceived in sin—that their hearts were by nature corrupt—and that GOD required truth in the inward parts. They heard Moses, as well as the Lord JESUS, declare "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind: This is the first great commandment: And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy *neighbor* as *thyself*." Here they could not but see their awful deficiency, and be terribly alarmed, when they heard the voice of eternal truth declare, "The soul that sinneth, it *shall die*." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The law, then, so far from promising life, denounces death; so far from encouraging the hope of reward for our imperfect righteousness, for the imperfection of our righteousness threatens us with the wrath of GOD.

3. But could not *reason* have pointed out to them the path of life? The apostles do not hesitate on this subject. They are persuaded of the entire insufficiency of reason to effect this great end. They do not entertain the faintest hope that their reason, or the combined reason of mankind, is able, by all the light it can furnish, to conduct them to eternal felicity. And we are bold to maintain that this opinion is uniformly prevalent in those who have justly considered the immense importance of eternal things; who accurately appreciate their own powers; and who have enjoyed the common light of the Gospel.

Untaught by revelation, to what knowledge can we obtain respecting the salvation of a sinner?

Can human reason discover whether it is even *possible* for sin

to be pardoned, consistently with the truth and majesty of GOD and with the good of the universe? Before it can come to a certain determination on this profound and awful subject, it should clearly understand the nature and extent of moral evil: the relation subsisting between the different order of intelligent beings; and how they are affected, if any one order sustain so great a change as sin must occasion.—Besides, it would require a high and comprehensive knowledge of the Deity in his nature and attributes. Now, can reason inform us what shock is communicated to the chain of intellectual being—what inroad is made upon the system of order—what degree of misery is introduced into the universe, when a world falls into sin? Or, can it declare how such an event is viewed by the eternal mind? Every one who weighs these questions, must be convinced that reason is entirely unable to determine even the *possibility* of salvation.

Besides, if the possibility were admitted or proved, who, from his own reason, or the reason of all men, would be able to point out the *means* by which so great a good as redemption from sin could be effected? What finite intellect can disclose how the breach upon the system of order could be fully repaired? how all intelligences should understand that it is a terrible evil for the creature to break the laws of GOD? how the sanction of that law should be so enforced as to deter others from transgressions? how the divine justice could be satisfied? and how GOD could maintain, without imputation, his essential character as a righteous Governor, who gives to every one his due? In what way all these momentous objects can be accomplished, and yet the sinner be justified and restored to the divine favor, human reason might as well pretend to discover, as we to mete out the heavens with our span, or measure the waters of the ocean in the hollow of our palm.

Again, though we should know what was necessary to be done in order to effect our redemption—can reason inform us whether GOD will *execute* the gracious and momentous work? Has reason been admitted to the counsels—has it discovered the secret plans of the ALMIGHTY? Does it perceive the evidences of pardoning mercy, in the corrupt affections of the heart; in the perverse bias of the will; or in the reprehensions and remorse of

an awakened conscience? Are the beneficent designs of grace intimated, in the various infirmities, disappointments, and pains of this mortal life; in the fears and agonies of death; in the apprehensions of future judgment? Do they beam forth in the boundless splendors of nature, which declare the majesty and glory of GOD? Does this shaking of the earth, does this raging of the tempest, does this voice of the thunder, proclaim, in Reason's ear, JEHOVAH to be the "the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin?" For an answer we might refer you to the schools of Greece and Rome, or to the untaught Indian. In every age—in every clime—among civilized and barbarous nations—the uniform and distinct voice of reason has been, *I know not how sin can be pardoned; I am entirely ignorant of any way of salvation.* In vain, then, do those pretend to be her votaries, who are deaf to her salutary admonitions; who trample upon that solemn law which she utters in her loudest note. The disciples of our blessed LORD, though tempted by a general defection to desert him, were not under such strong delusion as to imagine that they could be saved by their imperfect obedience, or by the instrumentality of reason. They saw that all human means, and all possible efforts of created strength, were inadequate to accomplish their salvation; and, therefore, they reply to the affecting address of their LORD, "To whom shall we go?"

II. The text implies that they had A FIRM BELIEF IN HIS PERFECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS AS A SAVIOR: "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Thou hast communicated, in thy discourses, truths which refreshed and and animated our souls. Thou hast not called our attention to the vain and perishing enjoyments of this transitory state, but hast spoken to us of spiritual blessings, of immortal honors, of eternal life. Thou alone canst direct our feet into the path of peace, and teach us the way of salvation. Though tempted to join the multitude of false disciples who have forsaken thee, though our own faith was beginning to fail;—yet, LORD, to whom, if we leave thee, can we go for comfort? Where can we find a master so affectionate —a friend so faithful? Where shall we hear such words of

mercy—such doctrines of wisdom, as have flowed from thy blessed lips?

1. This is the language of faith, and expresses the sentiments and exercises of every soul that flees to the Savior for refuge. The apostles, then, by this confession, acknowledge *their belief in* JESUS *as the promised Messiah.* They knew that GOD, by the mouth of his holy prophets, "at sundry times and in divers manners," had spoken of the great salvation to be accomplished by his Son. They knew, from the truth and faithfulness of GOD, that this promise could not fail, but would be fulfilled in its proper season; that the Savior was to be born in the city of Bethlehem, of the tribe of Judah and family of David: that he should appear during the continuance of the second temple, and by his presence make it more glorious than the first: that the expected period had arrived; and that the whole Jewish nation, rulers as well as people, were anxiously waiting for the manifestation of this illustrious personage to Israel. They saw JESUS of Nazareth: They learned the circumstances of his birth and parentage: They heard him speak with great authority, and instruct with superior wisdom: They beheld the works of almighty power which he performed, the incontestible proofs of his mission, and seal of his divine ministry: And, seeing all these evidences, which none but GOD could give, in favor of the high and glorious character he assumed, they believed him to be that Prince and Savior, who should save his people from their sins.

2. In their confession they acknowledge, also, *a belief in his ability effectually to instruct men in the way of life.* The human mind is, by nature, enveloped in darkness. Ignorant of GOD, and of the truths necessary to lead it into the way of peace, it wanders in the labyrinths of error: experiences the disquietudes of doubt; and can enjoy no stable hope, until it receives illumination from on high. JESUS is that divine instructer who, by his word and Spirit, shines into the benighted soul to give it "the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD" respecting the plan and means of salvation. Then the most interesting realities rise in all their importance, and appear in their true colors. Then are seen the justice, the holiness, the benignity of GOD: the evil of sin; the condition of the sinner, exposed to the divine wrath,

and entirely impotent of himself to escape its ruin; the glorious fulness, and gracious willingness of Jesus, to save to the uttermost; the abundant and incontestible proofs of this great truth in the beneficence of his life, the agonies of his death, the power of his resurrection, the honors of his session at the right hand of the Father, and the unspeakable blessings hence treasured up in him for miserable sinners. All these glorious realities are presented to the view of him who is thus divinely taught; arrest and rivet his attention; excite new emotions in his soul; awaken his hopes and fears; and cause him, with the utmost earnestness, as he would escape the misery and obtain the happiness here presented, to seek an interest in the merits of the only Savior. The confession in the text implies a belief that the Lord JESUS can illuminate the soul with the knowledge of all these interesting and momentous truths.

3. It also implies *faith in him as the only atoning sacrifice.* Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins. Guilt renders us obnoxious to justice, and the demands of justice must be satisfied. It is hard to conceive that any person, having just views of the holiness of GOD, and convinced of his own transgressions, can trust in JESUS CHRIST as his Savior, without believing the doctrine of the atonement. Can we derive comfort from the perfect example he has set us, when we are conscious that we have not followed that example? If no expiation has been made, how shall our sins be pardoned? How shall our guilt be removed? How shall the threatening of the divine law be executed? How shall the truth of GOD, which declares the wages of sin to be death, be established? If the LORD JESUS has made no atonement for transgression, what is the meaning of the victim immolated on the altar? Why were the sacrifices under the law, shadows of good things to come? Why was the blood sprinkled upon the people, and upon the book of the covenant? If the Lord CHRIST did not make his soul an offering for sin, how is he "the Lamb of GOD which taketh away the sins of the world?" If the sword of divine justice did not smite him, what mean the sufferings that marked the whole of his life—the deep groans that proved his inward troubles—the cup of affliction from which his holy human nature recoiled—the unutterable agony

that caused his blood to gush through every pore—the mournful exclamation, in the extremity of his torture, "My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why all this accumulation of woe upon the soul of the innocent sufferer, if he had not been "wounded for our transgressions," and if the LORD had not "laid upon him the iniquity of us all?" To profess that he has the words of eternal life is, consequently, to believe that his doctrine directs to the fountain of his blood, which alone "cleanseth from all sin;" for, without the washing away of sins, eternal life is impossible.

4. To be a perfect Savior he must be able, also, to ensure everlasting life to those whose sins he expiated; and, therefore, he must be possessed of power to apply his purchased salvation to the souls of his people. He, who joins in this profession of the apostle, consequently, *acknowledges his kingly office;* in the execution of which he reigns over the hearts and wills of his redeemed, defends them from their spiritual foes, and subdues all things to himself.

Thus the text expresses a firm and full conviction that he is the Messiah promised by the FATHER; and, according to the purposes of divine wisdom, that he possesses all the qualifications, and executes all the offices, necessary to constitute an all-sufficient and glorious Savior.

III. From such a view of his offices, and a complete satisfaction in his undertaking and character, arises an unconquerable desire for the blessings which he has to bestow; and hence the words of the text are to be considered as expressing A FIRM RESOLUTION TO ADHERE TO HIM AS THEIR SAVIOR AND LORD. "To whom shall we go," say the disciples, "but unto thee." They see that they must of *necessity* follow him, if they shall ever obtain the pardon of sin, and the felicities of Paradise. They know that he is the only way to the FATHER; "for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Like those ready to perish, they lay hold on this "Rock of ages." United to him they see safety; separated from him they behold inevitable death. Under such impressions, they cannot but resolve—and resolve immediately—to cast themselves upon his arm for salvation, and never to forsake him.

This holy resolution is formed not merely from necessity, but from a conviction of the *honor*, *delight*, and immortal *glory*, which await the followers of the Lamb. If, then, there was no voice of justice pronouncing the woe of sin; if there were no fiery prisons of wrath, and regions of everlasting despair:—still, the soul which has been taught of GOD would behold JESUS as "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely;" and pant after him as its only satisfying portion, and its "exceeding great reward." In the rapturous language of the Psalmist it would exclaim, "Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee?" If, when the world offers to its votaries the enchantments of pleasure, the splendors of wealth, or the dazzling honors of exalted station and power, they readily resolve to grasp the delusive prize—how much more shall they who have been taught to make a due estimate of things, whose views extend to both worlds, who know that the service of GOD is rational and delightful, who have by faith seen the glory of the LORD'S Christ, and who believe that an interest in his merits will secure to them a bliss, large beyond measure, and permanent as the days of Heaven—how much more shall they, through good and evil report, and in all varieties of condition, firmly resolve to lay hold upon the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

My Christian brethren, is your resolution to be for CHRIST, to continue in his exalted service, to follow him as faithful disciples, habitual and predominant? Especially, when you have been delivered from some impending danger, or fiery temptation; when, through grace, your faith is unexpectedly strengthened; or, when "the love of GOD is shed abroad" abundantly in your hearts; do you not, with renewed ardor, cleave to your adorable Savior? Does not his faithful remembrance of you, make him doubly precious in your sight? When the unbelief of Thomas was succeeded by faith, and he saw and recognised the crucified Savior as arisen, his full heart could scarcely express his gratitude and joy. He can but exclaim, "*My* LORD, and *my* GOD!" Amid his wonder and delight, he appropriates the blessed Redeemer to his soul; and feels, what Peter declares in the text, an unconquerable resolution *never* to forsake him. When the LORD

made all his goodness pass before his servant Moses, and proclaimed his name, "The LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquities and transgression and sin;" overcome with the wonderful manifestation of JEHOVAH'S love, he "made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped;" and having received large draughts of heavenly delight, he pants for the full fruition of GOD, and cries out, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

Such, in some measure, have been the exercises of thy soul, O Christian, when JESUS and his benefits have, in a peculiar manner, been manifested unto thee. What though false disciples go back to their folly, and walk no more with the Savior; what though multitudes never even profess his name; and but a little flock,—insignificant and contemptible, in the eye of the world,—be left to follow the good Shepherd; wilt *thou* not still repeat the profession, and make the holy resolution of the faithful few, "LORD, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!" Christian, thou hast made a good choice. Be not afraid nor disheartened. GOD has revealed unto thee the pearl of great price, and given thee faith to make it thy own. O, greatly esteem thy precious treasure. Be *assured* of thy interest in it. If thou hast adopted the language of the apostles; if thou art convinced of the utter insufficiency of all created means to rescue thee from ruin, and make thee an heir of eternal joys; if thou hast resolved, and dost still resolve, to receive the LORD CHRIST as all-sufficient for these glorious purposes; be encouraged. Thy merciful Redeemer casteth none out that come unto GOD through him. "Supported by the power of CHRIST, and by thy own faith, thou shalt be safe in the midst of dangers. Without *that* power, thy faith will prove vain. Without thy faith, *that* power will not be exerted."* Come, then, and avail yourselves of this great salvation. Seek in CHRIST pardon and deliverance, and embrace his offered mercy. Thy faith shall be increased, thy resolutions strengthened; thy mourning shall be changed into laughter, thy darkness into day; and in "JEHOVAH, thy Righteousness," thou "shalt be justified, and shalt glory."

* Bishop Hall.